Spirit and Institution in the New Testament

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SPIRIT AND INSTITUTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE words *Christian* and *Christianity* are sometimes used in our Western culture to denote a moral attitude or form of behaviour of which the speaker approves. Thus you may find someone describing as 'Christian' an act of material charity, or a habit of what is called 'honest doubt'. To use the words thus is to depart from their original meaning. The word *Christian* is first found in the New Testament (*Acts* xi. 26, xxvi. 28; 1 *St. Peter* iv. 16), and there it indicates members of a new human grouping. It is probable that the word was not invented by the group itself, but was a nickname pinned upon its adherents by observers from outside. If so, it may be that by the time 1 St. Peter was written it was already becoming a title of pride in the eyes of the group: 'If a man is punished for being a Christian, he has no need to be ashamed of it; let him bear that name, and give glory to God.'

In what follows I shall use these two words in their original sense. By Christianity, then, I mean the religion (or set of religions) which derives from that historical group with which the New Testament brings us in contact—the group's own name for itself was 'the Church' or 'the Church of God'.

In this sense, Christianity is a fact of history; a fact, indeed, of the present moment, but with a long story going back to the days at Jerusalem shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Christianity 'has long since become public property':

> Its 'sound has gone out into all lands', and its 'words unto the ends of the earth'. It has from the first had an objective existence, and has thrown itself upon the great concourse of men. Its home is in the world; and to know what it is, we must seek it in the world, and hear the world's witness of it.*

* Newman, *Development of Doctrine*, pp. 3 f.

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The world's witness of Christianity has been very varied, and often very hostile. But it has had its critics also from within. The most radical of the domestic criticisms runs more or less as follows: 'The one and only thing that matters in Christianity is the challenge of God to the human spirit, and the grace-enabled response, which must always be an individual's response, to that challenge. The essence of Christianity is—or should be—the resulting habit of loyalty to God, based on a recognition of one's total dependence on Him:

> From our side this committal (of self to God) is all. Everything else is God's work through Jesus. In Him God gives Himself to each one. God rules within, by guidance and power, setting the task for each and giving the ability to carry it out. Thus life *is* communion with God. The distinction between secular and sacred goes. What is wrong must be cut out. All that is good is His service. . . . Viewed as God's gift to us, as His revelation in Jesus, it is inexhaustible. . . . It is both natural and supernatural. Natural, because it is what man was made for, and supernatural, because only possible as power for it comes from God.*

This, then, is what matters in Christianity. But', it is said, 'historical Christianity by contrast has been impenitently institutional, an *externalized* religion. It has maintained, and given importance to, hierarchy, sacraments, and liturgy. It has proclaimed the authority of a visible Church "outside of which there is no salvation". It has imposed dogmas, it has lent its protection and sanction to a human philosophy. It has a long, unending record of political interference. All this constitutes what may be called the outer shell or integument of historical Christianity. It is alien to its essence, which it has concealed and thwarted, "stifling the Spirit" (1 *Thess.* v. 19).'

The greatest upheaval that Christianity has ever sustained from influences within its own ranks, the sixteenth-century

* W. E. Wilson, *Essential Christianity*, pp. 130 f.

Reformation, was in large measure inspired by the spirit of such a criticism of institutionalized Christianity. But the heirs of the Reformation, it may be argued, did not escape from institutionalism; they only substituted one set of institutions for another. The Christian West used to know, and suffer under, one Church. The Reformation has left us with a number of churches; institutionalism has not been transcended but propagated.

It cannot be denied that Christian institutions—like civil institutions—have been the occasions of great evils in human history and in the realm of the spirit. But, since *abusus non tollit usum*, the question of the status of Christian institutionalism is not settled by that admission. I believe that the criticism is based on presuppositions which are not ultimately valid. But, for that very reason, an adequate answer to it would involve an examination of the nature of man and of that willed human response to God which is religion; and such a philosophico-religious investigation is outside the scope of this Congress on *The New Testament To-day*. I propose to myself a more limited object. I wish to ask whether Christianity, even at the most primitive stage of its development discoverable through our documents, even as it sprang from the ministry of Jesus, was ever 'a religion of the spirit' in the sense demanded by the criticism.*

I

Of course, if by 'a religion of the Spirit' we do not mean to *exclude* institutionalism, but only to remind ourselves that Christianity is not *merely* institutional, it would be absurd to pretend that New Testament Christianity is not a religion of the Spirit. The response which the New Testament demands to the challenge of the Good News from God is nothing less

* On the wider issue, cf. F. von Hügel, *Eternal Life*, the chapter on Institutional Religion and the Conclusions; also, E. Cuthbert Butler, *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*.

than a total self-committal to God thus addressing us; a self-committal which is essentially interior. This response is what St. Paul calls 'faith' (*pistis*). Faith is a word which has had a long history in Christianity since St. Paul. We are here concerned not with what it may have meant to Augustine or Thomas Aquinas or Luther, but with its meaning in the Pauline epistles.

For St. Paul, faith is a reality of the inner world of the spirit, and is distinguishable from all outward consequences, effects, or manifestations: 'With the *heart* we *believe* unto justice; but with the mouth confession is made unto salvation' (*Rom.* x. 10*). The *confessio fidei*, the external and public profession that we accept the Good News as from God, is one thing; belief itself, faith, the actual personal acceptance, of which the profession of faith is a manifestation to others, is another thing. It is a thing of the heart. And it is implied that where this interior reality of faith is withheld, there is no 'justification', no possibility—it might seem—of a right, grace-transformed, relationship of man with God.† We are 'justified as a consequence of faith' (*Rom.* v. 1).

This Pauline faith is something more than an act or habit of the intellect. It is not located by St. Paul in the reason (*dianoia*), but rather in the heart (*kardia*). We must, however, remember that for him, with his Jewish and Old Testament background, the heart is not man's emotional or affective equipment as contrasted with his cognitive and ratiocinative faculties. It is not on the same level as, or on a more superficial level than, reason. It is deeper, more radical, than discursive reason. It is the human person focused in the most interior self; what later mystical writers will call 'the apex of the soul'. It is probably identified, in Ephesians iii. 16 f., with 'the inward man'. Faith is born and lives in this most interior sanctuary of the human person. It commits the individual to God,

* St. Paul is expounding Deuteronomy xxx. 14.

† St. Paul is not here considering the question of the salvation of infants, or of those who reject the Gospel 'in good faith'.

who speaks the Good News to him, there where the individual is most inwardly, and incommunicably, himself.

Faith is, indeed, a human act, though doubtless an act permeated by, and originating in, grace.* But it is vigorously contrasted by St. Paul with 'the works' of the Law. It is not an act of strenuous, external, merit-seeking, obedience (this is not to say that it is in no way an act of obedience), but an act of surrender, of receptivity, of allowing God to act upon 'the inner man'. St. Paul was a convert from Pharisaic Judaism, and to him the difference between his new and his former religion was that Judaism sought merit by works, while Christianity by faith accepted justification.† Thus, for him—and even in an epistle like Colossians, where the controversy with Pharisaic Judaism is no longer the central issue—the whole of Christianity finds its stable foundation in faith (i. 23). Charity, it is true, is even greater than faith (1 *Cor.* xiii. 13). But it is faith that finds vent for action through charity (*Gal.* v. 1). And charity, like faith, is essentially an interior reality; it is poured out in our *hearts* (*Rom.* v. 5; cf. 2 *Thess.* iii.

* It is curious that hardly any text of St. Paul states precisely and undeniably that faith is God's work in us (*Eph.* ii. 8 is differently expounded by modern exegetes). In 2 Corinthians iv. 13 it is not clear whether faith is a presupposition or a consequence of the Spirit. The faith which is mentioned as a particular charism in 1 Corinthians xii. 9 can hardly be simply identified with the faith which belongs to *all* Christians. The faith which is mentioned as 'a fruit of the Spirit' in Galatians v. 22 is treated as parallel with 'goodness', 'meekness', etc., and so seems more specific than that faith which is the basic presupposition of all human worth in the supernatural order. Similarly, it is doubtful whether the faith which is 'measured out' to individuals according to Romans xii. 3 is that faith by which we are all 'justified'. Nevertheless, the logic of Paulinism, for which man's salvation is wholly God's act, would seem to require that the faith by which we accept the Gospel is something given by God. Faith is, in fact, at once the indispensable condition for the reception of grace, and itself also an effect of grace. St. Paul was led by the history of his own conversion and by the needs of his anti-Jewish polemic to emphasize almost exclusively the former half of this complex truth. But cf. 1 Timothy i. 14: 'Now the grace of God hath abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus', on which C. Spicq (*Les Épîtres Pastorales, ad loc.*) comments: 'Along with grace, and as its direct emanations, have been manifested faith . . . and love.'

† To point the contrast between the two religions, St. Paul allows himself to say that, whereas the Jew sought to justify himself by his works, the Christian is justified 'by his faith' (*Rom.* iii. 28). But his real teaching is that the Christian is justified by *God*. The Christian's faith is not the agent, but the condition, of his justification. This distinction between agent and condition is important when it is a question of relating the function of the sacraments, and indeed of the redeeming death of Christ, to that of faith.

5) and appears to be something radical and fundamental to the inner life of the faithful (*Eph.* iii. 18).

The noun 'faith' (*pistis*) is not found at all in St. John's Gospel. It occurs once in the Johannine epistles and four times in the Apocalypse. These statistics, however interesting to the literary critic, mean nothing theologically; the verb 'to believe' (*pisteuein*) is used more often in the Fourth Gospel than in all the Pauline epistles taken together.

In fact, the Gospel and epistles of St. John agree completely with St. Paul that faith is basic to Christianity and to salvation. The first epistle of St. John sums up what God requires of us as being 'that we should make our act of faith in the name of his son Jesus Christ, and that we should love one another' (iii. 23). 'Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God' (v. 1). Over against Christianity there is the unregenerate world: 'the whole world about us lies in the power of evil' (v. 19). The victory which has overcome the world is, precisely, our faith (v. 4): 'Who is it who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the son of God?' (v. 5). It is as believing in the name of the son of God that Christians 'possess eternal life' (v. 13).*

As for St. John's Gospel, it moves from the affirmation in the Prologue that the Word made flesh gave power to become children of God to 'those who believe in his name' (i. 12) to the concluding statement of its own purpose in xx. 31: 'These things have been written down, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that (so) believing you

* It does not seem relevant to our inquiry that the *object* of faith in the Johannine writings is often the Messianic or filial status of Jesus; whereas Pauline faith tends to have as its object the death and resurrection of Jesus. Personal and circumstantial factors condition the way in which a thinker will state basic Christian truth. St. Paul inherits the outlook of the primitive Church at Jerusalem, its attention riveted on the overwhelming fact that the crucified Jesus had been raised from the dead. An evangelist, concerned with the ministry of Jesus, starts from the drama of contemporary acceptance or rejection of the claims made in and through that ministry, already before the crucifixion. I do not think that either St. Paul or St. John would have thought that the other was teaching as true anything that was inconsistent with his own convictions.

may have life in his name.' And between these opening and concluding statements it is mainly composed, till we reach chapter xiii, of dramatic representations of the birth and preservation, or the rejection or loss, of faith. It goes without saying that this Johannine faith is an interior reality, the condition of our reconstitution as no longer mere products of human generation, but re-born 'sons' or 'children' of God. Faith's intellectual quality may be more emphasized in St. John than in St. Paul; on the other hand, its moral conditions are strongly stressed—it is moral defects which explain why some fail to believe.

The Pauline and Johannine writings are the literature of a young and missionary religion, and it is natural that they tend to concentrate on the initial act of faith whereby a man 'turns from idols to serve a God who is living and genuine' (cf. 1 *Thess.* i. 9). But this act is only the starting-point of a *state* or habit of faith. Christians can be succinctly described as 'believers' (e.g. 1 *Thess.* ii. 10, 13). And this habit of faith, once engendered, can grow (2 *Cor.* x. 15).

It has been usual in the past to look to St. Paul and St. John for theological articulations of New Testament Christianity, though to-day we are more aware than of old that the Synoptic Gospels and Acts are themselves steeped in theology. The idea of faith, and the word itself, are not absent from these Gospels. The word sometimes occurs in sayings which it is reasonable to regard as editorial. Thus, 'Give us more faith' (*St. Luke* xvii. 5) is probably an editorial introduction to the saying which it leads up to. Similarly, it is just possible that St. Matthew viii. 10 = St. Luke vii. 9 ('Not even in Israel have I found so great faith') may be an editorial introduction to the saying which follows it in St. Matthew ('Many shall come from the East and the West, etc.'), which may be intrusive in this context. Often, the faith of a person who is about to be healed by Jesus (and in one case, St. Matthew ix. 2 and parallels, the faith of his companions) is mentioned or commented on; it may be that in several of these instances also the mention of faith is editorial

or accretive.* There is, however, good evidence of the association of faith with miracles in St. Matthew xiii. 58 (cf. *St. Mark* vi. 6): 'And He did not perform many miracles there (sc. in Nazareth) *because of their unbelief*'.

But the demand for faith is, in fact, the very nerve of the Synoptic argument. St. Mark sums up the proclamation of the Good News by Jesus in the words: 'The time is fully come and the Reign of God is at hand; repent and *believe in the good news*' (i. 15). The wording of this summary is, in my opinion, an editorial revision of the briefer version preserved in St. Matthew: 'Repent, for the Reign of the Heavens is at hand.'† But there can be no doubt that the Marcan version expresses the nature of the challenge of the Good News from God. Jesus came before the public in His ministry as having a commission from God, as one who had been 'sent', cf. St. Matthew x. 40 (= *St. Mark* ix. 37; *St. Luke* ix. 43), xv. 24. He brought from God a message of Good News, the good news of the eschatological Reign of God. It is because what He preaches ('these words of mine', *St. Matt.* vii. 24, 26) is a message from God that it can become the unshakeable basis, the rock, for human living. The Good News is, in fact, the proclamation of the Messianic Reign ('Blessed are your ears, because they hear; many prophets and just men have desired... to hear what you hear, and have not heard', *St. Matt.* xiii. 16 f.). Clearly, the only way in which this message could become effective, the indispensable condition for the success of Jesus' mission, was that its truth as a message from God should be

* The primitive Christian community, to which we owe the Synoptic tradition, was not interested in what to-day is called 'faith-healing' as such. It will have seen our Lord's cures as Messianic signs, prefigurements of the spiritual blessings of 'the last days', in which it knew itself to be already living. Since the preliminary condition for the reception of these blessings was faith, it was natural to emphasize the faith of the sick people who were cured by Jesus. It is not easy to fix on any particular Synoptic miracle of healing in which the reference to this faith is clearly original. Possibly the vivid Marcan account of the healing of the epileptic boy is a reproduction of an oral account by Peter: 'Come, have pity on us, and help us if Thou canst. But Jesus said to him, "If thou canst"! To him who believes, everything is possible. Whereupon the father of the boy cried aloud, I do believe: succour my unbelief' (ix. 22–4).

† For a critical comparison of St. Mark i. 14 f. and St. Matthew iv. 17, cf. my *The Originality of St. Matthew*, pp. 123 f.

accepted by the public to which it was addressed. Such acceptance of a message as divine is faith. Jesus was not urging His public to have faith in God, *tout court*. He was inviting it to believe in a particular Act of God, embodied in His preaching, His work, and His person.*

And here it may be noted that just as, for St. Paul and St. John, faith was the condition of a 'resurrection from the dead' or a 'new birth' of the human personality in its most interior reality, so acceptance of Jesus' gospel would entail a reconstruction of life in harmony with His prophetic reinterpretation of Old Testament religious morality. The Great Sermon (*St. Matt.* v–vii; *St. Luke* vi. 20 ff.) doubtless has editorial 'interpolations' in one of our documents, as it has suffered from the editorial pruning knife in the other. But there can be little doubt that, taken together, these two records allow us to form a substantially true conception of the inwardness and the infinite horizons of our Lord's moral and religious teaching. The simile of the house built on a rock with which the Sermon concludes is curiously like the notion of a life 'rooted in, and *founded on*, love' (*Eph.* iii. 17), and it recalls to our minds the Johannine notion that 'our faith' is 'the victory that overcomes the world' (1 *St. John* v. 4 f.). There can be no dispute that Jesus proclaimed a 'religion of the spirit'.

II

It might seem natural, at this stage of our investigation, to try to determine in greater detail what was the content of the Good News in which Jesus invited his public to believe, and to compare it with the content of the gospel as preached by the apostles afterwards. But it will be more to our present purpose to ask: To whom was the message addressed? From

* There are striking similarities between the religious movement disclosed in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian movement. But they are insignificant compared with one enormous difference, if the Dead Sea sectarians never claimed that the Messianic Act of God was taking place in their midst.

whom was the act of faith demanded? To neglect this question, or to give it a hasty answer, might lead us to overlook a factor which is vital to our understanding of the position of Jesus of Nazareth in the world's history, and of the religion which He founded.

Jesus belonged to the Jewish people. That great people is still with us to-day; and still to-day, as in the days of the early Roman Empire, it is in common estimation, and as viewed from the outside, a peculiar people. Various reasons may be, and doubtless have been, offered—again from outside—to explain this peculiarity. But, as is so often the case, the real explanation is a religious one, and we can turn to Jewish witness for a statement of it. Leon Roth, in his fascinating *Judaism, a Portrait*, has insisted that what is really essential to Judaism is its conviction that the Jewish people is the 'holy community'. As the holy community, its constitutive bond is not precisely racial homogeneity but the practical acceptance of the Torah as divine:

> The 'household of God' is the community of Judaism. Its root loyalty is not to a person or an aggregate of persons but . . . to a Teaching. This Teaching is the 'Law . . . of Moses' . . . Judaism knows Moses not as lawgiver but as prophet . . ., indeed, as the greatest of the prophets; and 'his' law is not his at all: it is God's. . . . The Teaching dropped the teacher's name. It is no longer for Judaism, as in the Bible, the Torah *of Moses* . . . but, barely and anonymously, Torah. (Pp. 17–19.)

Roth is able to illustrate this notion of Judaism not only from Maimonides but from Josephus, and there can be no doubt—I do not think there is any dispute—that such was the Judaism of the first century A.D.

Many human groups have, in history, claimed to be this holy community of the Covenant through Moses. The Samaritans still survive—reduced now to tiny numerical

proportions—and it would appear that they claim, as against the Jews, to be the authentic People of God. The same claim is made, not only by them and by the Jews, but by at least two great Christian bodies, each for itself. The notion of the holy community may, in fact, be said to have proved itself one of the most stubborn and persistently influential of all human ideas and convictions. And it should be noted that each of these claimants—as is essential to the very notion—maintains that it itself is the one authentic or legitimate continuation, in contemporary history, of the community of the Exodus from Egypt and the Covenant of Sinai.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have been described above as though they were the literature of a sect. But it should be observed that, for the members of the Dead Sea group, this group was itself, in contradistinction from the Jews who still worshipped in the Temple at Jerusalem, the true People of God's covenant. Like the Samaritans, the Dead Sea community did not deny the basic notion of Judaism, the idea of the holy community. But, like the Samaritans, they *identified* the holy community with their own group.

Modern Judaism, however, is descended from the much larger body which, in New Testament times, still acknowledged the legitimacy of the Jerusalem priesthood and the Temple liturgy as performed by that priesthood. Within this body, which we may for convenience describe as the Great Tradition of Judaism, there were divergent tendencies, wings, parties. Our own Gospels tell us of the 'Pharisees' and the 'Sadducees'. But although a famous English version of the Bible speaks of the 'sect' of the Pharisees, it is most important to remember that these parties were all within the one community, and each acknowledged the members of the others as being thus within. You could say, if you liked, that there were High Church Jews, Low Church Jews, and Broad Church Jews. But all these acknowledged and belonged to what you would then have to describe as the one Jewish 'Church'. The community of the Dead Sea Scrolls, on the other hand, were

outside the community of the Great Tradition, whose right to the title of the People of God they would hotly dispute.

There can be no shadow of doubt, unless our documents are utterly misleading, that Jesus was not only of the Jewish race, but lived and worked in the Great Tradition. The originality of His insights found expression through the traditional terms and concepts of the Jewish faith and theology, the divine authority of which, in its Old Testament crystallization, He assumed throughout. He proclaimed the Good News of the Reign of the Heavens; both the terms of this phrase are rooted in the Old Testament. When he sent His discreet but quite definitely affirmative reply to John the Baptist's question: 'Art thou he that should come?' He implied that He was fulfilling the Jewish Messianic expectation. His own favourite self-description was, it appears, 'the Son of Man', and it cannot be doubted that this is a description derived from the Book of Daniel (ch. vii). Even when, as on the question of divorce, He taught a doctrine that was at variance with that of the dominant schools of casuistry, He is represented as grounding his teaching on a thoroughly rabbinical solution of an objection derived from the Old Testament (*St. Matt.* xix. 4–8; cf. *St. Mark* x. 2–9), and—more profoundly—on His own exegesis of a text from the Book of Genesis. And in the very sermon in which He sets forth the spirit of the religious ethics of the New Covenant, He emphasized, St. Matthew tells us (v. 17), that He had not 'come' to undo 'the Law and the Prophets'.

All this shows Jesus as standing within the general 'universe of discourse' that goes with the notion of the holy community. But there is evidence, too, that He accepted the identification of that community with the community of the Great Tradition. He taught in the ordinary Jewish synagogues of Galilee. He sent a cured leper to register his recovered health before the priests (which no member of the Dead Sea community would have done). He illustrated His attitude to the precept 'Thou shalt not kill' by the picture of a man about to offer

his 'gift' at the 'altar'. Though He found Himself in controversy with both Sadducees and Pharisees, He is said to have bidden His hearers obey the Scribes and Pharisees, because they occupy 'the chair of Moses'. He describes the altar as consecrating the gift, and the Temple as God's dwelling-place. And in Jerusalem He showed His holy zeal for the Temple by casting out the money-changers. It is entirely consonant with this general impression, derived from the Synoptic Gospels and the traditions they incorporate, that St. John's Gospel represents Him as saying to a Samaritan woman: 'You worship you cannot tell what, we worship knowing what it is we worship; *salvation, after all, is to come from the Jews*' (iv. 22).

On the basis of that loyalty to the holy community and its Torah, which was essential to the Great Tradition, there was room, as we have seen, for a variety of emphases. It appears that Jesus would have seemed to His contemporaries to belong to the Apocalyptic stream of orthodox Judaism, to the 'school of thought' that laid stress upon the Messianic hope, and interpreted that hope within the context of the Pharisaic belief in the angels and the resurrection of the body. The precise originality of his own message, seen in this general framework of thought, lay in its implication that the Act of God, to which Apocalyptic looked forward as to the very *raison d'être* of the holy community, was already taking place in his ministry, and that He Himself was 'He that should come'.

It cannot be questioned that this was originality in its most tremendous sense. It explains the popular impression that here was one who 'taught with authority and not as the scribes'; and it justified the concern aroused by His ministry in authoritative circles. And, after all allowance has been made for the effect on the primitive Christian tradition of the Church's own controversies with Judaism, it can hardly be doubted that Jesus Himself, at least as the ministry drew towards its denouement, published the most searing criticisms of those who controlled the thought and practice of the Great Tradition. This, however, makes it all the more significant

that He is never represented as having criticized Jewish institutionalism precisely *as* institutionalism. Indeed (and the point is vital), in so far as an actual historical holy community is itself an 'institution', involving an institutional machinery and officialdom, *He could not criticize institutionalism as such* without undermining the very basis of His own message. In claiming to be 'He that should come' to re-establish the Reign of God in God's own people, He was committed to the validity of the notion of a People of God, and committed to its identification with the actual community within which He worked: 'My errand is only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (*St. Matt.* xv. 24).

We have thus reached a very important preliminary conclusion: The message of Jesus was necessarily addressed, not to individuals as merely human beings, but to the Jewish community of the Great Tradition *as a community*. If you will forgive the comparison, the very nature of His claim places Him, in the eyes of a historian, not on the level of a revivalist preacher addressing Himself to individuals without reference to their 'denominational' allegiance, but on that of a Luther in the period before His formal breach with the Roman Catholic Church. It made Him essentially a figure of the world's public history.

III

It is only when this conclusion has been reached and assimilated that we can fully appreciate the 'dialectical moment' in the development of the story of the gospel, when it became clear that the appeal of Jesus to the faith of the holy community, whose leading representatives were among the Scribes and Priests, was destined to 'fail'. This 'failure' is the theme of St. Matthew xi, xii, though it is there taken in conjunction with a critique of the reality of the response even of the

common people.* Doubts about the possibility of reconstructing a 'biography' of Jesus should not blind us to the fact that a phase of affirmative expansion in His ministry was followed by a phase of relative withdrawal and concentration upon a more limited task.

What, it may be asked, would such a 'failure' signify, if our Lord's claim was true, if He really was 'He that should come'?

In the first place, it would mean that the Great Tradition, in its role as the holy community, had lost its *raison d'être*. The holy community was indeed the 'chosen people' of God. But, as Leon Roth points out (*op. cit.*, p. 16), 'it is so easy to claim to be of the chosen people, and to forget that the choice means duty, not privilege. . . . Yet the Biblical appellation of the Jews is not the "chosen" but the "holy" people, that is, a people set apart for a special vocation. Thus Judaism is . . . not what some or all Jews happen as a fact to do. It is what Jews should be doing (but often are not doing) as members of a holy people. It is not a product but a programme, and the Jews are the instrument of its fulfilment.'

The 'programme' of Judaism is, according to the Messianic hope, a programme for the future. To the extent that Judaism's meaning is found in the Messianic hope—and the Apocalyptic hope of the Reign of God, when taken in its full depth, places the *whole* meaning of Judaism in that hope—to that extent a community which had rejected its Messiah would have lost its vocation and its role in the providential ordering of history. If it survived, it would survive as an empty husk—an 'Israel according to the flesh', to use Pauline terminology, but no longer the holy community.

But would it survive? Had not Israel's continuing existence been a result of the special providence of God?

> Thou art thyself my king and my God, who commandest the saving of Jacob. Through thee we will push down

* The fact that St. Matthew is here utilizing a common theme of primitive Christianity ('his own received him not') is not sufficient to justify scepticism about the reality of the cleavage between Jesus and official Judaism. This cleavage could only be eliminated from critical history by a *tour de force* upon the documentary evidence.

> our enemies with the horn: and through thy name we will despise them that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow: neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from them that afflict us: and hast put to shame them that hate us (*Ps.* xliii. 5–8).

This conviction that the Lord God is the lord of history, and that He is, as it were, committed by His own covenant to the protection and preservation of His holy community, because it is His instrument of predilection and the focus of His government of mankind, is a dominant theme of Isaias, and the basis of the message of deutero-Isaias.

A Judaism, however, which had rejected its Messiah could no longer claim this special divine protection. This is what gives its profound significance and appropriateness to our Lord's apocalyptic prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. There is no need to suppose that this, as recorded by the evangelists, is nothing more than a *vaticinium post eventum*. If Jesus was really in earnest about His Messianic claim, such a prophecy was a logical inference from official Judaism's rejection of that claim. The 'glory would depart' from Jerusalem and from the House that had been God's dwelling-place; and the forces of destruction, that waylay every human achievement, would find that at last they were attacking a city with no divine defender. Israel had rejected the very Act of God. So much the worse for Israel.

Yes, but if the holy community rejected the Good News, would that not also be 'so much the worse' for the bearer of the news, the one who claimed to be 'He that should come'? What is a Messiah without a Messianic community? He would be a 'relative' without a 'correlative'. If the holy community existed only for the sake of the Messiah and His age, can we not also say that there would be no function for the Messiah except in and through the holy community which had accepted Him as such?

It seems to have been foreseen by Jesus that, His claim being what it was, its rejection would spell His own destruction.

The critical historian may certainly ask himself whether those predictions of His passion and death which the evangelists put on to the lips of Jesus have, as they stand, been given a precision and colouring which they did not originally have. But there is no need to suppose that the tradition of such sayings does not rest on any basis of forebodings actually uttered by Jesus Himself. The charism of prophecy was hardly necessary for Him to see that, if He persisted in His public work and claim, the authorities would be goaded into action; and in that rough age the result—since He did not propose to defend Himself—was predictable. Look at the matter from the point of view of those who had failed to 'believe in Him'. What surer way was there of demonstrating that this was not the Act of God than to contrive that the holy community should officially disown Him? There is truth, if not strict historical truth as that term is understood by modern scientific historians, in the picture of the leaders at Calvary, saying: 'He saved others, but He cannot save Himself! Is He the king of Israel? Let Him come down from the cross, and then let us believe in Him' (*St. Matt.* xxvii. 42 = *St. Mark* xv. 31 f.; *St. Luke* xxiii. 35).* He did not come down. Had not the gospel disproved itself by the acid test of its own appeal to the holy community?

IV

Thus the rejection of the Act of God spelt death for the divine Messenger, no less than it entailed the 'death' of the holy community which had rejected Him. But, if the claim

* For a discussion of the reliability of the Christian tradition that the Sanhedrin encompassed the condemnation of Jesus by Pilate, cf. P. Benoit, *Le Procès de Jésus*, and *Jésus devant le Sanhedrin*, in *Exégèse et Théologie*, vol. 1, pp. 265–311. On the other side, cf. P. Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (*Studia Judaica*, Band 1). It should be observed that for the Jewish leaders, if they decided that the claim of Jesus was untrue, he was something worse than a 'heretic'. History has only too many examples of the handing over of heretics to the secular arm. The Sanhedrin would have been in a specially difficult position, since the Roman government did not pose as the arbiter of Jewish religious disputes. The Jews must produce some charge which would pass muster in a Roman court; and, if the charge was palpably incapable of being substantiated, must bring pressure to bear on the governor.

of Jesus was true, *death could not be the end*: 'My word . . . which shall go forth from my mouth . . . shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it' (*Isaias* lv. 11). In the very measure in which He was certain of the truth of His own message and its divine authority, our Lord must have known that its 'failure' was only an appearance. And He will not only have known it, but have made it known. Scholars still ask themselves whether the predictions of His resurrection in the Gospels are, or are not, predictions 'after the event'. They may, in their present form, have been coloured by memories of the event; but (like the predictions of the passion) they are in substance guaranteed by the fact that Jesus, who doubtless could so easily have saved himself by renouncing his claim, refused to do so. He could only refuse because, for Him, His death was not the end.

But the resurrection of the Messiah would be a pointless theatrical device, unless there were to be a 'resurrection' of the holy community also. The victorious Messianic message must find its lodgement in the faith of the Messianic community.

Hence we see the vital importance of the 'dialectical moment' in our Lord's ministry which took shape in the selection, choice, training, commission, and empowering of 'the Twelve', and the promise that they should be 'judges of the twelve tribes of Israel' (*St. Matt.* xix. 28).

For although 'they that were His own' had not 'received' the word of God, there were some—a group which St. Paul, using a term borrowed from the Old Testament prophets, would call a 'remnant'—who had received Him. They had done so by individual acts of faith and adherence. But they shared a common faith in a single object, and were fashioned by Jesus into a 'little flock' (*St. Luke* xii. 32), thus becoming a collective group to whom, as to the true and believing Israel, the Israel which had acknowledged the Act of its God, the continuing holy community, God would 'give the Reign'. And, since a community requires at least a minimum of

organization and 'government', the Twelve were to be the new leaders of this community.*

There seems to be no ground in history for supposing that, after our Lord's crucifixion, there was any proclamation of the Good News previous to the conviction that He had in fact risen from the dead;† indeed, both St. Paul and Acts seem to suppose that an essential qualification of an 'apostle' was that he should be able to render eyewitness testimony to the risen Christ.

But if, in the loneliness of Calvary, the holy community had been reduced to bare identity with the one Suffering Servant of the Lord, the resurrection of the Messiah was pregnant with, was in a sense identical with, the resurrection of the holy community. And from the first discoverable moment we find the new and triumphant version of the Good News on the lips of the leaders of what our documents now call 'the Church of God', the *ecclesia* of the new redemption from an apocalyptic 'Egypt'. It was 'the Church of God' which, according to the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul had persecuted during the short interval between the Lord's resurrection and his own conversion. But the thing is more important than the name. It must constantly be borne in mind that the resurrection of the Messiah would have been 'in vain' without a 'resurrection' of the holy community also. And obviously there was no

* It could be argued that the 'sending out' of the 'apostles' which is at the base of the Synoptic record of the ministry (*St. Matt.* x. 5 ff.; cf. *St. Mark* vi. 7 ff.; *St. Luke* ix. 2 ff.) was of merely transitory significance, a passing phase of the ministry of Jesus Himself. But the fact that the apostles were from the beginning twelve in number is probably connected with the traditional designation of the holy community as the 'twelve' tribes of Israel. The apostles were thus the spearhead of the transformation of the expectant into the Messianic holy community.

† Dr. Dodd's reconstruction of the earliest attainable form of the *kerygma* includes the resurrection of Jesus among its constant items. More recently (*The Appearances of the Risen Christ: an Essay in Form-Criticism*, in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham, 1955), he has argued that *formally* 'there is nothing to distinguish the Gospel narratives of the resurrection appearances ftom the "Paradigms" and other concise narratives on the one hand, and the "Novellen" or "Tales" on the other, which occur in other parts of the Gospels, and they merit the same degree of critical consideration, not only in their aspect as witnesses to the faith of the early Church, but also as ostensible records of things that happened' (p. 35). It may be added that the specific mention of the burial of Christ, in the 'kerygmatic' passage in 1 Corinthians xv, seems to me to lend force to the view that the belief that Jesus had risen was related not only to the appearances but to the discovery of the empty tomb.

resurrection for that community in its material identification with unbelieving Jewry. No; the 'little flock' had entered upon its prerogatives and its mission, and a new age had opened in world history.

True, the Temple still stood, the Jewish priests still performed the ancient sacrificial rites, newborn babes and proselytes were still being initiated by circumcision into the community that found its common religious life in this liturgical system; and Moses was still being preached in the synagogues. For a time, too, the followers of the new 'Way' still frequented Temple and synagogue and were allowed to do so. The logical consequences of a new insight are not always immediately translated into action, not always even immediately drawn by the reason.

Logically, however, if the Good News is true, there was already a fundamental breach between the Church and the continuing Great Tradition of Judaism. To the eyes of a Jewish or an unbelieving historian it will appear that the Church was already logically 'in schism' from what St. Paul calls 'Israel according to the flesh'—just as the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls was in schism. But if Jesus was the Messiah, as the Church now proclaimed, then the Great Tradition, in rejecting the Messiah, was in schism from the Church of God, and its public worship had lost its authority.*

The holy community, an actual historical group that is a group precisely *qua* religious, must have both public religious rites and liturgy, and an authorized ministry for its liturgical worship. But already in the early days of the Jerusalem church Peter and John, according to Acts (iv. 19), had appealed from the voice of the Sanhedrin to 'the voice of God'. The 'old things' had passed away, and 'He that sat on the throne' had 'made all things new'.

From the earliest period to which historical research and

* Already, then, the true holy community was divorced (in principle) from those observances which had made Judaism a national religion. The Church was already 'catholic', though it may not have realized this at once.

criticism can take us back, the Church of God had its ministry (the Twelve), its initiation rite (baptism), and its liturgy (the Eucharist). Psychologically, it might matter a great deal, but theologically it would not matter at all, if those who followed the Way were 'cast out of the synagogues' as, according to their tradition, the Lord had foretold; for, under the leadership of the Twelve, they were all 'of one heart and soul' in a new fraternity (Acts iv. 32) which they identified with the true Israel of God. And when that other prediction was fulfilled, and the Temple lay in ruins, they could dispense with the sacrifices of the old Torah, since they had 'a cup which they blessed' and 'a bread which they broke' (1 *Cor.* x. 16). And already, in a crisis which almost shattered the brotherhood, they had decided in principle that, though one must be baptized, one need not be circumcised.

V

Liturgy, sacred rites, and a hierarchy, in a Church which claims to be the unique beneficiary and vehicle of salvation, obviously add up to institutionalism. Thus it seems to me that primitive Christianity, at its earliest discoverable stage, was already not only a religion of the spirit, but also an institutional religion. Is it possible to link this institutionalism with the ministry of Jesus, or is it the first stage of a corruption of the original gospel? The question takes us to the very heart of the problem of Christian origins.

In recent years the 'quest of the historical Jesus' has seemed to have found itself, at least temporarily, in an impasse. It has brought us, in fact, or so it may appear, into contact not with the historical son of Mary of Nazareth, but rather with the primitive Church, its institutions and its beliefs. A whole generation of scholars has been largely concerned with determining what conditions in the mind and circumstances of the primitive Church are implied by, and will explain, the contents

and pattern of the Gospels and the pre-evangelic tradition.* It is as though we had been reading Mommsen, not to learn about the history of Rome, but to discover the Weltanschauung of the Germany of Mommsen's age. Shall we ever be able to take the jump which will bring us past the early Church to Jesus Himself? The problem is in essence a historical one, but it has pastoral overtones.

Everyone† must admit to himself that the early Church is an effect requiring an adequate cause or causes. Nearly everyone admits that the historical Jesus is, at least, the major cause of which we are in search. But is He, in Himself, an adequate cause of whatever the early Church regarded as essential to its own religion; or was that religion an amalgam of the message of Jesus and other factors in the immediate environment or the subjective conditioning of the early believers? Basically, this has been the great problem of New Testament scholarship for over a hundred years. But the terms of the problem have been altered, greatly to the advantage of traditional convictions, by the progress of scholarship, and not least by the fact that it is no longer possible to suppose the great time-gap between Jesus and the writing of the major New Testament books, which Strauss held to be necessary for his own hypothesis. The main features of traditional Christianity—those, at least, with which we are here concerned, as determining it to be a religion not only of the spirit but of institution—go back to the pre-Pauline Church of Jerusalem.

For the traditional believer, however, this advance is not yet sufficient; he cannot be indifferent to the question whether or not the gap between the primitive *ecclesia* and the son of Mary can be closed. And, on the other hand, as a historian he cannot deny *a priori* the possibility of a primitive corruption. After all, we have, in the story—so far as we can reconstruct it—of the Gentile-Jewish controversy in the time of

* This is the problem of the *Sitz im Leben*, not of Jesus Himself, but of what, if the word can be used in a purely neutral sense (not implying untruth), may be called the primitive Christian myth.

† In modern Oxford this assertion perhaps calls for an apology to the spiritual heirs of Hume.

St. Paul, clear evidence that *either* the universalists were encompassing a revolution, *or* the Judaisers were yielding to the fascination of influences which were essentially pre-Christian and sub-Christian. But our question concerns the moment before that controversy had broken out. Had sub-Christian influences *already* entered into the substance of Christianity, before it turned to the world beyond Palestine?

I want to suggest that possibly the time is ripe for scholarship to attempt the final leap.

I have already put forward the view—not a very novel one!—that the 'little flock' of the disciples of Jesus is the embryo of the Church. And I have suggested that the Twelve, the embryo of ecclesiastical hierarchy, is a group of dominical institution. It has, of course, been pointed out already by others that the designation of Judas the traitor as 'one of the Twelve' can hardly be supposed to be an invention of the apostolic Church.

There is one Gospel passage which I must approach with the warning, or the reassurance, that I am not trying to make a 'denominational' point: the promise to Simon Bar-Jonas in St. Matthew xvi. I need not waste your time in arguing that this passage is an authentic part of the genuine text of St. Matthew, or that its language seems to be a direct translation from Aramaic. Nor do I mean to use the passage here to vindicate any special standing among the Twelve for Peter. I wish, however, to make two points about this group of sayings.

1. *On this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it.* This saying reminds me of two other statements attributed to Jesus, both of which we have already considered in other contexts.

The question has been raised about this saying, whether it supposes that the Church is to conduct a victorious war of aggression against the gates of Hell, or whether the forces of

Hell are envisaged as the aggressors, and the Church as the victorious defender of its established position. It seems to me that this question may be answered by reference to the other Synoptic passage where Jesus is said to have used the figure of a building founded upon a rock: 'and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall; it was founded upon rock' (*St. Matt.* vii. 25 = *St. Luke* vi. 48). Here, clearly, the house is the victor over the aggression of nature. Now, if the saying in St. Matthew xvi was not fashioned by the same mind which composed the finale of the Great Sermon, it was fashioned by someone else upon the model of that finale. In either case, the composer of the second saying (about the Church) was thinking of the gates of Hell as performing the same role with reference to the Church as the forces of nature played against the house of the Sermon's finale.

The Sermon teaches that the good disciple of Jesus has built his personal, ethico-religious life on the 'words' of Jesus, words which will not 'pass away' (*St. Matt.* xxiv. 35 = *St. Mark* xiii. 31, *St. Luke* xxi. 33), because they are a divine message, a word of God. Such a disciple has thus found, in a word of God the lord of history, creator of nature, giver of the Covenant, a source of stability which no created powers can undermine.

Similarly, then, the saying in St. Matthew xvi teaches that the Church will have a stability which will triumph even over Hell's aggression, because it has been founded by the Lord's Messiah on the rock of His own choosing. But this is to attribute to the Church that supernaturally guaranteed abidingness which the prophecy of the destruction of the Temple would deny to the Great Tradition of Judaism. Thus our saying answers the tremendous problem raised by the predicted downfall of the Great Tradition. For, though man cannot bind God to fidelity, it is the basic conviction of Judaism that God has bound himself to the holy community; this is the

meaning of the Covenant. The greatest of secular empires has a birth-certificate which is also a death-warrant. But the holy community does not die—or, if it dies, it dies to rise again in greater glory—because it is the peculiar choice of the Lord of history. If then Jesus, from a standing-point within the Judaism of the Great Tradition, prophesied the downfall of the holy community *as identified with that Tradition*, He was bound to transfer the abidingness of the holy community to some other body, different from the community of the Great Tradition, yet able, like it, to claim continuity with the *ecclesia* of the Exodus and the Israel of the prophets. The fact that the saying in St. Matthew xvi does precisely this—or rather promises to do this—is, for me, an *a priori* argument for its genuineness as a saying of Jesus; and this argument is strengthened by the literary similarity with the finale of the Great Sermon.

2. But if Jesus was realistically determined to perpetuate the holy community in His 'little flock', the question of government was bound to arise. And if He was 'He that should come', bringing with and in Himself 'something greater' than the Temple (*St. Matt.* xii. 6), then all government in the reconstituted holy community must be exercised directly by Himself or by derivation from Him. From this point of view, it is only what we should expect, that our passage appoints Simon Bar-Jonas to a position of authority, giving him 'the keys of the Reign of God'. Simon's authority will not be something intrinsic to his person as Simon, but derived from 'the great shepherd of the flock' (1 *St. Peter* v. 4). Precisely as thus derived, this authority, though wielded by a man, will be heavenly authority, drawn from the same sphere from which alone the rock-function and the permanence of the holy community derive: 'whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven'. It cannot be a coincidence that the second occurrence of this binding-and-loosing metaphor in

St. Matthew is in the second passage which explicitly mentions the Church by that name.*

The holy community, we have argued, needs not only government but rite and liturgy. There may be room for argument whether the pattern of the Eucharist as given in St. Paul and—somewhat differently—in St. Mark or St. Matthew is directly of dominical origin. There can hardly be any question that a Eucharistic rite was 'instituted' by Him at the Last Supper. As regards the rite of baptism, it is true that the only New Testament books which directly refer this to Christ's institution are St. Mark (in the appendix to ch. xvi) and St. Matthew. But it is probable that the emphasis and shape given by the Synoptic tradition to the narrative of our Lord's own baptism by John the Baptist means that the early Church saw this as a sort of prototype of the Christian sacrament. St. John's Gospel, also, besides the conversation with Nicodemus, has a curious statement that the disciples of Jesus were baptizing during His own ministry.† In any case, the

* Dr. Dodd has shown that there is good reason to think that St. Paul knew, and made use of, the teaching contained in St. Matthew xviii. 15–18. In that case, the pericope is at least not a product of the closing years of the apostolic age, when, it might be urged, the 'spirit' was losing ground far and wide to 'institutionalism'.

The whole passage in St. Matthew xvi (13–20) is profoundly *theological* and 'Christological'. A question about the public reaction to the person of Jesus leads up to Simon's confession of faith which, though made by a man, is attributed to divine revelation. The Church, built by Christ on the rock, is to have a stability which, as we have seen, is given by God and guaranteed by Christ. The authority which Peter is to wield will derive from Christ, and His authoritative decisions will embody the decisions of 'the heavens', i.e. God. Thus Peter will be the mouthpiece of divine authority. This authority will be mediated to him by Christ; and it will be remembered that, according to St. Matthew xi. 27, all revealed knowledge of God is mediated by 'the Son'—the object of Simon's confession of faith in St. Matthew xvi. 16.

I may add here that I do not attach great importance to the *word* 'Church' in these two passages of St. Matthew. Whatever word was used in the Aramaic original (the Aramaic equivalent of 'synagogue' has been suggested), it would inevitably be rendered by a Christian translator as *ecclesia*. The question is, if it be granted that Jesus spoke of building (on Peter) something against which the gates of Hell would not prevail, what can he conceivably have proposed to build except the holy community? On the possibility, in a Jewish context, of the metaphor of 'building' a community, cf. O. Cullmann, *Saint Pierre*, ed. 1, pp. 173 f.

† On St. John's own principles, this could not, of course, have been fully sacramental baptism, since 'the Spirit was not yet given'. But it could have been the historical embryo of Christian baptism, as the 'little flock' was, in my opinion, the historical embryo of the Church.

use of baptism as an initiation rite was so universal and, so far as we can judge, so primitive in the Church that there seems good reason to think that it rested on the authority of Jesus.

VI

In the preceding paragraphs we have been led into an area of controversial details. I want now to go back to the more basic issue, and to try to make clear why I think that the question whether Jesus was the founder—or refounder—of what, in one aspect, may be correctly called an institutional religion does not depend simply on the answers which, as historians, we may be inclined to give to these problems of detail.

Dare I say that I think that some people talk or write as if Jesus were not really a complete human being*—so complete as to belong, as human beings must belong, to a real concrete environment which acted on Him and in which He acted? He was as genuinely human as the Emperor Augustus; and I venture to suggest that He had His feet as firmly planted on *terra firma*. Issuing from His ministry—*post hoc* if not *propter hoc*—there came a great spiritual and institutional religion, as deeply rooted in the Jewish past as it really transcended it. We know a good deal about the Palestinian environment in which Jesus lived and died. We know that its religious culture was uniquely monotheistic. But we also know that the real *geistiges Band* of Judaism was the conviction that the Jews were the People of God's choice, the one holy community. We know that the main body of the Jews identified this holy community with the Great Tradition centred in the Jerusalem priesthood and cultus. There is every reason to believe that Jesus, in the early stages of His public life, accepted this identification.

* Of course I believe that He is God the Son. But that is a matter of faith rather than of historical science.

Did He, or did He not, claim in some real and matter-of-fact sense that the Messianic Reign of God was being inaugurated in His work?

I should myself admit that there is an element of ambiguity in this question. If most Jews expected the Messianic age to be introduced in a single flash of divine lightning, it is clear that Jesus saw His own work as a process in time. Hence, there could be a sense in which, while He was really introducing the Reign of God, that Reign was not a *fait accompli* till His ministry—and, as it turned out, His passion and resurrection—were accomplished. Granted this qualification, are we not now in a position, not merely as believers but as historians, to affirm that He *was* making this astounding claim? I know that this is a most momentous question—the most momentous question, perhaps, of all with which we are faced by history. Can we refuse to it the answer Yes, without importing into our historical judgements a factor of hesitation or scepticism that arises from some other sphere of thought?

But suppose that the answer is Yes. And suppose that Jesus was intelligent enough (do we really believe that He was intelligent?) to realize that His claim, His new insight, involved a wealth of logical and practical consequences. Then see Him in His actual environment and, remembering that His ministry was to end on Calvary, consider whether He must not have foreseen that 'failure' as vividly as Julius Caesar foresaw the implications of his proposed passage of the Rubicon. His claim was of a nature that presupposed the truth of the belief in the holy community. Unless the holy community conceded the truth of the claim, unless it 'believed in the Good News', the claim was itself void, and the word which had gone forth from the Most High must return to Him void. With His rejection by the Great Tradition in prospect, was it not inevitable that He should use the short time left to Him to fashion, in the very womb of that Tradition, a realization of the idea of the holy community which would preserve continuity with the community's past but would be newly conditioned by the

community's corporate faith in His claim and in the message He had brought, the message which He *was*? But if there was to be a community, there would have to be social structure and provision for community acts. If we do not always clearly realize the inescapable implications of the Messianic claim, it is because we are heirs not only of Jerusalem but of Athens, for whom it is not immediately absurd to suppose that a Jewish Messiah could conceive of the holy community as a bodiless ideal.

Of course, everything that I am here saying presupposes that, while Jesus accepted defeat in the factual sense of accepting martyrdom, He did not accept martyrdom as the end, either for Himself or for the holy community. There was, in other words, if I am right, a vision* in the heart of Jesus to which Christian faith corresponds. But just as our faith should make us more, not less, realistic about the environment, so, I suggest, this vision will have made Jesus entirely realistic about His own situation and His own work. If, despite the Jewish leaders, that work was the work of God and therefore bound to triumph, it followed that provision must be made for the time after the passion. Looking at the thing as a historian, I do not think that Jesus despaired, 'lost faith', before the end. As a Christian, I do not believe He despaired *at* the end.

VII

The question with which we set out was, whether we could find a stage at which Christianity, or its prelude in the ministry of Jesus, was a religion of the spirit, but not yet a religion of institution. If I am right, no such stage can be discovered. Institutionalism was embedded in the presuppositions of our Lord's ministry and was incorporated in its intended result.

* The Messianism of Jesus was, in one aspect, a prophetic Messianism. The prophet Isaias had 'seen the Lord' in a vision which inaugurated his prophetic mission. Jesus is reported as having said: 'None knoweth the Father save the son.' Such a knowledge of God, in a Jewish context, entails knowledge of the divine redemptive purpose.

But it is important to remember that, if Christianity has institutionalism in its essence, it is *also* a religion of the spirit. It was here that St. Paul found the great contrast between his new religion and the Pharisaic Judaism to which he had previously adhered. Doubtless, Judaism too was a religion of the spirit, requiring of its practisers an interior allegiance to the presuppositions of the Torah; and, if such allegiance was forthcoming, a proselyte could be admitted to the holy community whatever his racial origin or cultural background. In fact, however, not only were circumcision, and the aspect of Judaism as a national culture, a barrier to many Gentiles, but there was a strong racial current in the Judaism of the Great Tradition. In theory, God could raise up children unto Abraham from the stones of the desert, but in practice things did not easily work out like that. Christianity, by the very circumstances of its origin in a rejected Messiah, and of its early breach with the Great Tradition, was both logically universalistic and soon became 'catholic' in practice. This universalism is the consequence of its faith, of its being a religion of the spirit.

And this is perhaps the place to remind ourselves that we have here given little consideration to the question of the *content* of the Good News. To describe Jesus as the founder of an institutional religion is, in my opinion, true; but it is so far from being the whole truth that, expressed thus without qualification, it sounds like a grotesque misrepresentation. For nearly two thousand years the Church has been engaged in a deepening penetration of the significance, the bearings, and the potentialities of the Gospel; and the growth of understanding will presumably go on till the Second Coming of the bearer of the message. Still to-day, as in the time of St. Paul, the Church can pray that her children may be filled with that knowledge of God's will that brings all wisdom and spiritual insight with it (*Col.* i. 9).

It is no light matter, nor is it altogether a comforting thing, to decide that Christianity cannot escape from its destiny to

be an institutional religion. The record of institutional religion is writ large in history, for all to see, and if we can point to the basic claim of Jesus as evidence that He accepted institutionalism in principle, the critics of religious institutions can remind us that He Himself is recorded as having developed a tremendous invective against those who in His own day were of repute in the institution of the Great Tradition.

But if Christianity is institutional, it is also, as a great English layman has taught us, both 'intellectual' and 'mystical'. Each of these three 'elements' of religion poses its own problems; each needs to be balanced and checked by the other two. As regards the institutional element, Christianity has long since recognized that even excommunication is a sentence which, though it be passed by legitimate authority, may yet be unjust. *Abusus non tollit usum.* And if that seems to some a rather lame conclusion to the whole matter, then let us remind ourselves that our Lord Himself was the Great Excommunicate, handed over to the secular arm for the imposition of the supreme penalty. At that moment, before Jesus could utter His *consummatum est*, it could be argued that the High Priest in Sanhedrin was still the legitimate highest authority in the holy community. Has institutional religion ever more nearly succeeded in 'quenching the spirit' that when—so the Gospels tell us—the priests extorted from Pilate that unjust sentence of death? But we, who can look beyond Calvary to Easter morning, we who see in that death and resurrection the redemption of Christ's Mystical Body—what can we do, as we 'survey the wondrous Cross', but join in the Church's paradoxical song: 'O happy fault'?

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